

house; for his meals had got all queer and straggling since he had appeared in the character of a jolly middle-aged waterman, and lunch was a kind of dinner, taken at irregular hours, and tea seemed to be going on all the afternoon and evening; while the only real and comfortable repast was taken when it was dark, and no more boating could be done till the morrow.

"You will be a great accession to our club," said Mr Thwarts to me. "You used to pull at Cambridge, I believe."

"Not much," I replied. "Of course I subscribed to the college-boat, but I never rowed in it. My boating has been entirely confined to pottering about with a cigar in my mouth. I never got hot over it in my life."

"O Bob!" cried Nelly, "when you won that handsome cup!" The handsome cup was a pewter pot with a glass bottom, and the college arms engraved upon it, underneath which were inscribed the names of four victorious oarsmen and their cockswain, and I was handed down to posterity as a successful No. 3.

The pot was a swindle: we only got two boats to enter for the college scratch fours that year, and as the day fixed for the race was a wet one, we tossed who should be supposed to have won.

Alas! I had yielded to the promptings of vanity, and displayed the mendacious trophy to my aunt and cousins when they came to lunch at my chambers one day, in the course of a shipping carnival; and as I had suppressed the details of the race, they had gone away firmly impressed with the idea that I was fit to row for the championship of the Thames. I now told the real story, which was received with shouts of incredulous laughter.

"The invention of similar anecdotes is his professional pursuit," said my uncle in explanation.

"But this is a fact, I assure you," I cried.

"Oh, of course," said my uncle. "But the next time you tell it, Bob, take my advice, and season it with a little *fiction*, to make it sound more probable."

"I am sorry to press you to row, if you do not like it," said Thwarts; "but we have accepted a challenge from the Dedwater Rowing Club, and can only get seven oars together. Mr Martin must row, if you will not."

"Yes," cried my uncle; "and I can hardly pull my weight; besides which, the training would kill me; so, if you persist in your refusal, Bob, you will be guilty of *arunculeide*."

"Dear papa!" said Ellen pathetically. "Oh! cousin Bob!" What could a poor fellow do but yield? I yielded. When I called on the following morning, I found that Ellen was out shopping with her mother, so I took two of the younger girls out on the water; for I enjoyed aquatic exercise when taken in a rational manner—I lolling on the cushions in the stern of the boat, and they rowing me about.

"Who is this Mr Thwarts?" I asked, thinking to extract information from Jenny, an observant puss of fifteen.

"Mr Thwarts is a very great man," said Jenny, "he owns everything and everybody nearly about here, and is ever so rich. And he is a magistrate, and could be a member of parliament if he wished, only he prefers boating, and he likes Nelly, and papa and mamma are glad of it."

"And does Nelly like him?"

"I don't think she does, much," said Jenny, resting on her oar, and looking mysterious—"at least, not in the way you mean. But you must not tell I said so!"

I vowed secrecy, and meditated. Carroll, then, was not the man I had to fear, but Thwarts, and I made up my mind to thwart him. Only I could not do it; on the contrary, he thwarted me—that is, he made me row No. 5 in an eight-oar against my will. I had always pitied galley-slaves with a theoretical pity, but now I sympathised with them from my soul.

Never shall I forget my first "spin" up the river. It was all very well at first, while we padded easily along with a slow and lingering stroke, though even then the cockswain's remarks were unpleasant, who addressed me as "No. 5," as if I had really been a prisoner at Brest.

"Time, No. 5!" "More forward, No. 5!" "Don't pull so much with your arms, No. 5!"

As if any one could pull with the legs! But after a while Thwarts began to quicken his stroke, and the effects were most unpleasant; I broke out in a violent perspiration, I got out of breath, my hands felt as though they had received the punishment of the cane, and the remembrance was invadily enforced upon me that that scholastic instrument of torture is sometimes otherwise applied; for those mee-looking white rugs which are tied on the seats of boats are delusions and snares, especially when they wriggle round in such a manner that the knots come uppermost.

At the expiration of five minutes, which seemed like fifty, I cried out "Stop!"

"Easy all!" said the cockswain.

"What is the matter?" asked Thwarts.

"The matter is, that I am composed of flesh and blood, not iron and brass," I gasped; "that I am a man, and not a steam-engine of forty horse-power."

"Ah, you are out of condition," said Thwarts.

"A week's training will bring you up to the mark. However, we will take it easy to-day. Paddle on all!"

So I paddled on in silence, but I formed an inward resolution, which I broached to Nelly that very evening.

"Well," said she, as I put a gentle on the line with which she was angling at the bottom of the garden, "how does the boat go?"

"Bother the boat!" cried I. "Look there!" And I exhibited my hands, which were covered with large white bladders.

"Oh, that is nothing," said she. "I despise a man who has no blisters."

"Indeed? Then I shall be sorry to incur your scorn, but I mean to fit myself for it as soon as possible. I will not row any more."

"O Bob, when papa has set his heart on our beating the Dedwaters, and we cannot make up the eight without you; how unkind!"

"You are very warm about this boat-race," said I sarcastically.

"I am," she replied; "I shall be so disappointed if you do not row."

"Yes, because you wish to please this Thwarts. But I have no reason for currying favour with the fellow. Hang Thwarts!"

"With all my heart; after the match."

"You little humbug!" cried I. "I know all about it!"

"What! are you too against me?" she said, pouting. "I thought I had one friend in dear old Bob!"

"What! you do not wish to have him then?" She shook her head.

"Honour bright?"

She nodded.

"Why do you wish me to make a water-martyr of myself, then?"

"Because I want to beat that horrid L. R. O. Besides, I have a reason. Do not ask me what; I will tell you some day."

After much solitary self-communing, I now came to the conclusion that my former speculations as to the state of affairs were all wrong; that uncle and aunt Martin had settled the match between Ellen and Thwarts in their own minds, and were cordial to me because I was no longer, in their estimation, dangerous as a lover, though as a familiar cousin I might act as a spur to the hesitating lover's intent; that Ellen, though not liking to run counter to her parents' wishes, much preferred myself, and that she urged me to remain in the Longreach eight to keep me near her.

I longed to put an end to my doubts and anxieties by a formal offer of marriage, and had often tried to do so. But I had been making love to her in a jocular manner ever since I was twelve and she ten years of age, and she persisted in taking everything I said in fun. Still I thought my chances looked so well, that I obeyed her wishes and remained one of the crew of the L. R. O.

"Have you begun training yet?" asked Thwarts, when we met at the boat-house next day.

"No," said I. "Is it really necessary?"

"Of course it is. No man can last over a mile-course unless he is in training. And after all

what is it? A healthy *to* of moderation, temperance and exercise in the open air for six weeks, which will be of the greatest possible advantage to your constitution, besides clearing your brain after the hard work you must have been giving it lately. By the by, what a capital story your last novel is."

In an evil hour, and totally ignorant of what was before me, I allowed myself to be cajoled, and promised to enter on a course of training the very next day. My uncle was delighted; Ellen smiled approbation and gratitude; and my seven fellow-sufferers declared that I was a thorough good-fellow; and as that time I was still foolish enough to care for the praise or blame of my fellow-creatures, I rejoiced in their applause, and went to an early couch, soothed by the consciousness of virtue.

I always sleep in summer with my bedroom window open, a practice which was peculiarly pleasant in my Longreach lodgings, because of the honeysuckle and jessamine which grew luxuriantly over the verandah immediately beneath, allowing fragrant sprays to struggle through the casement. There was a nightingale, too, who made a practice of serenading me from an opposite tree, and whose song on this particular night was particularly soothing and brilliant, though it must have been after I had dropped off to sleep that he adapted human words to his melody, and treated me to—

Oh! had you ever a cousin Tom?

Did that cousin happen to sing?

Of sisters you've got a round dozen, Tom,  
But a cousin's a different thing.

Doubtless I dreamed that, for my sleep was profusely illustrated, and dissolving views chased each other across my retina with the rapidity of the "Scenes from the Holy Land" upon the white sheet at the Polytechnic; and all my visions that night were of a pleasing nature, especially the last, which represented an eight-oar skimming over a smooth sea, with a bride crowned with orange blossoms, and bridegroom attired in white ducks and a straw hat, reposing luxuriously in the stern. I was that comfortable bridegroom, and cousin Nelly was—

"Hullo! not up yet!" roared a voice of thunder, which brought me from a horizontal to a sitting posture with an electric start; and on looking in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, I saw with horror a man's head and shoulders protruded through the window."

"Go away!" I cried. "I will call the police! I will shoot you! I have a revolver under the pillow."

"Have you, though? That cannot be permitted till after the race, for you might meet with an accident."

"Thwarts!" I cried, recognizing him. "How did you ever get there?"

"Climbed up the verandah, of course," he replied. "I could not wake you by shouting and throwing stones from below. But come, are you going to lie in bed all day? It is nearly seven o'clock."

"What! in the evening?" I cried, springing out.

"No, no, of course not; seven A. M. to be sure."

"Then in another three hours I will talk to you; but my constitution will not stand night-work," said I.

"Nonsense," replied Thwarts, introducing the whole of himself into my desecrated bower. "You have promised to train like the rest of us, and our rule is to meet at the Angler's Joy at a quarter past seven; bathe, just a header, and out again; run from the Willows to the Rushes, which is a measured mile; cool down, and dress, and then breakfast together at the inn. Disperso till twelve, then take a short row, returning to dinner at two. Dine together, and separate till five, when we take a good spell up the river, returning to supper at eight, and turning in at ten sharp."

"We take all our meals together at the Angler's Joy, then?" I remarked.

"Yes," said Thwarts, "or some of us would be tempted to eat unlawful food. But come,